

October 08

Water for life and livelihoods

Things are getting really interesting in the North West River Basin District. We have been busy writing the draft River Basin Management Plan and looking at ways that we can work with partners to help improve and protect the North West's water.

Tenth Liaison Panel Meeting

The Liaison Panel held their tenth meeting at Mersey Docks and Harbour Offices on the 18th September.

The panel took time to look through the draft Plan and were invited to give comments on the content. The feedback received will help to improve the plan before it is released for consultation in December.

Paul Seaby of the Environment Agency's National Environment Assessment Service gave an update on the strategic environmental assessment of WFD. This will be released for consultation alongside the dRBMP.

United Utilities' Alan Godfree gave a presentation on the company's Water Safety Plans. Alistair Maltby gave feedback on a recent meeting of North West Rivers Trusts to discuss potential local actions.



MEP finds out about WFD

We recently took Gary Titley, Labour MEP for the North West to Burrs Park in Bury to show him what the WFD means for the Region. We demonstrated some of the methods we use for monitoring and some key stakeholders, including members of the Liaison Panel joined us for lunch to talk about their own experiences of being involved in WFD.

Preparing for the launch of the draft River Basin Management Plan

The dRBMP will be released for public consultation on 22nd December 2008. We are planning a variety of different ways to let our stakeholders know about the consultation and to encourage responses. We will also be gathering ideas for additional actions that could be included in the final plan.

The consultation can be found on the Environment Agency Website alongside "What's in Your Back Yard". This is an interactive map which will let people find out specific WFD information about their local waterbody.

WFD News

After recent changes, we now have a full WFD project team.

Programme Manager

Nicola Riley

Principal Officer

Anu Handoo

Project Officer

Anna Steele



What's coming up?

November 2008: Our Regional Director and Chief Executive will sign off the draft River Basin Management Plan.

December 2008: The public consultation on the draft River Basin Management Plan will go live on our website from the 22nd December. The consultation period is six months.

January – June 2008: We will be talking to different people and organisations to encourage their response to the consultation and gather additional local actions that can go into the final River Basin Management Plan.

What's in your back yard?

Information about the WFD in your area can be found on our website. You will be able to look at the state of specific waterbodies, what actions have been proposed for your area and what we hope to achieve on these waterbodies.

For more information

For information about anything in this e-bulletin please contact Anna Steele on 01925 542375 or via email: anna.steele@environment-agency.gov.uk

Solway Tweed Consultation

The Solway Tweed River Basin District will also be releasing a dRBMP for consultation in December.

Solway Tweed is the only RBD in the UK that crosses borders and is jointly managed by the Environment Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. It covers parts of North Cumbria and a small part of Northumbria.

Improvements in our rivers over the last 10 years

In 2007 General Quality Assessment showed us that 78% of rivers in the North West were classed as good or very good for chemical status and 51% for Biological status.

This is up by 4% for chemical status since 1998 and 12% for biological status since 2000.

Classification

We've now released the most recent General Quality Assessment (GQA) data which tells us the quality of our rivers.

GQA monitoring shows that water quality has significantly improved over the past 20 years however recently these improvements have begun to slow.

The WFD will enable us to build on these achievements and focus on the areas that still need improvement. It looks at a wide range of elements within a waterbody to accurately establish its overall ecological health. The WFD sets much tighter standards for water quality and if one element in a waterbody fails, it is unable to be classed as good.

Despite continued improvements, due to the tighter standards, the WFD will show that only 24% of the North West's waterbodies are achieving good status. However 44% of the waterbodies that are failing are only doing so by 1 element. This means that taking action to improve a single measure may improve many waterbodies.